

December 11, 2007



**TRANSCRIPT
December 11, 2007**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

PRESENT

Councilmember Michael Knapp, President	
Councilmember Phil Andrews	Councilmember Roger Berliner
Councilmember Marc Elrich	Councilmember Valerie Ervin
Councilmember Nancy Floreen	Councilmember George Leventhal
Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg	Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg

ABSENT

Councilmember Marilyn Praisner



December 11, 2007

1 President Knapp,

2 Good morning, everyone. We've got a full house this morning; thank you all for coming
3 down. We appreciate the high school students who have made the trip for recognition in
4 both academics and athletics this morning. First, we will rise for a moment of silence.
5 We have a number of things to keep in mind today. First, I would ask that we keep in
6 our mind our former Council President, Mrs. Praisner, as she continues her recovery.
7 We had two tragic incidents yesterday, which I would urge us to keep in our minds in
8 silence. Ms. Mary King, special education teacher at Hoover, passed away yesterday.
9 And there was a tragic house fire in Derwood, in which the lives of Guamina Garcia,
10 Adam Sanchez, and Paula Corel's life were taken, and Oscar Garcia, who is still in the
11 hospital recovering. And so we would ask you all to keep them in your prayers and
12 thoughts as we take a moment of silence. Thank you. We begin our day with our first
13 presentation, which is a proclamation and recognition of Montgomery County High
14 School students as semi-finalists and finalists in the Siemens Competition, presented by
15 Councilmember Floreen.

16
17 Councilmember Floreen,

18 Thanks. Actually we're giving out certificates although we should have a proclamation of
19 how proud we are of you all. The Siemens Competition in math, science, and
20 technology is the nation's premier science research competition for high school
21 students; 1641 students nationwide entered the competition this year. Montgomery
22 County had six students named semi-finalists, two advanced to the regional finalists,
23 and we had by far the greatest number in the state of Maryland, 8 out of 11, so yea
24 Montgomery County. Our regional finalist Benjamin Lu and Boris Vassilev each
25 received a \$1,000 scholarship, plus \$2,000 each for our schools' math and science
26 programs. So our kids are returning our tax investment already for us. We are so proud
27 of you all. I will note that three young women won the national competition, and you
28 know, but we are proud of you all for leading Montgomery County to such an honor, we
29 know you're going to go far. You're going to design the next space technology. You're
30 going to move us into the world of competition in a way that many of us only wish we
31 could in terms of the way this world operates and will continue to grow in the world of
32 science and technology. We wish we had your skills, and we are so proud of you all.
33 Let's see, we have Paul Kominers, Damjan Korac, and Yang Yang. Let's see, Paul is
34 from Walt Whitman. Damjan is from Walt Whitman. And Yang Yang is from Montgomery
35 Bear High School. They are semifinalists. We've got an Andrew Young, Benjamin Lee,
36 and Boris Vassilev are from Montgomery Blair as semifinalists/ finalists. We have
37 regional -- the regional finalists Benjamin Lu, Louis Wasserman -- Benjamin is from
38 Richard Montgomery, and Louis is from Montgomery Blair, both here. And we applaud
39 their teachers, Susan Reagan, Donald [inaudible] Walt Whitman. Susan is from Blair.
40 And Jennifer Hoover, Richard Montgomery. Way to go teachers. We are really proud of
41 you all. Let's see here. We have got, I think, is it Paul who is going to say -- give us a
42 few words? Come on over here. Or just use the mic here.

43
44 Paul Kominers,



December 11, 2007

1 Thank you. I'd just like to say what an honor it was to be selected as a semifinalist in the
2 Siemens Competition for Damjan and me. I would like to congratulate of course the
3 students from Blair and RM for their success in the competition. And I would like to
4 thank the school system for supporting us and the County Council for recognizing us.
5 Thank you.

6
7 Councilmember Floreen,
8 Well done. And we have Louis for Montgomery Blair who is going to speak.

9
10 Louis Wasserman,
11 Yeah. I'd like to congratulate Ben for a very excellent project. I enjoyed your
12 presentation a whole lot at the regional finals. I would very much like to thank Mr. Akin
13 for being so supportive during all of this. And I probably should thank my mentor, at the
14 University of Maryland, Professor [inaudible].

15
16 Councilmember Floreen,
17 Ben and Louis are the regional finalists. Do you want to tell us anything special about
18 the competition? What you had to do? Did you have to explain something
19 incomprehensible?

20
21 Louis Wasserman,
22 Oh, yes. We had to put together a backboard and a presentation, both of which were for
23 public viewing, so people came in and looked at our projects, and we had to explain to
24 whole lots of people.

25
26 Councilmember Floreen,
27 What was your project?

28
29 Louis Wasserman,
30 I did a project in theoretical computer science that described some big unsolved
31 problems in another way that [inaudible].

32
33 Councilmember Floreen,
34 See, isn't this good? He translated this so that normal mortals could understand it.

35
36 Louis Wasserman,
37 I've had some practice.

38
39 Councilmember Floreen,
40 Do you want to tell us, did it have a technical name?

41
42 Louis Wasserman,
43 It was called a Monitoring and Characterizing of P.



December 11, 2007

1 Councilmember Floreen,
2 Of P?

3
4 Louis Wasserman,
5 The letter P.

6
7 Councilmember Floreen,
8 Okay, obviously. Okay, that's enough. Thank you. And Jennifer Hoover, our teacher
9 from Richard Montgomery, do you want to share a few words with us?

10
11 Ms. Hoover,
12 Actually, Ben is going to as well. Just to clarify, I am the IB Magnet Coordinator at
13 Richard Montgomery High School, and his teacher was not able to be here today. One
14 of the teachers involved in his research was his extended essay advisor at Richard
15 Montgomery, [inaudible]. And of Ben, she just wanted to comment that he really is -- he
16 takes the creative mind into science, which in today's world is the mind that we need in
17 science. So why don't you tell her or us about your project.

18
19 Benjamin Lu,
20 First of all, I would really thank in addition to Ms. [inaudible], my mentor at NIH, Dr.
21 Gutkin, for providing me the facilities to conduct my research. I really think that -- I
22 appreciated the support that I got from the public school system, but I would really like
23 to see a lot more of what we have here at the Siemen's Competition and other science
24 competitions. So I mean, yeah, more support would obviously be appreciated. I also
25 think that Louis would join me in congratulating Isha Jane for winning the national
26 competition for individual projects. And yeah.

27
28 Councilmember Floreen,
29 It's okay. Tell us the name of your project so we will be suitably impressed.

30
31 Benjamin Lu,
32 Basically, well I worked with cancer cells and -- .

33
34 Councilmember Floreen,
35 You're translating it.

36
37 Benjamin Lu,
38 Yes. I worked with cancer cells, and I tried to find a new pathway for drugs to inhibit
39 cancer growth.

40
41 Councilmember Floreen,
42 Oh, thank you. Did you find it?

43
44 Benjamin Lu,



December 11, 2007

1 I found a pathway, yes.

2
3 Councilmember Floreen,
4 Okay, excellent. Anything more you would like to say?

5
6 Benjamin Lu,
7 That's about it.

8
9 Councilmember Floreen,
10 Okay. Why don't I ask the other folks who are here to tell us a little bit about their
11 projects. Come on down.

12
13 Yang Yang,
14 Hi, I'm Yang, and I also worked at the National Institute of Health. I also did cancer
15 research, and I basically tested a combination of therapeutic drugs that are used in
16 clinical studies right now, and tested to see if they worked synergistically with each
17 other. After I found out two drugs that worked together, I did a molecular analysis and
18 determined how in the cell cycle these two drugs regulated different pathways in order
19 to achieve a combination effect.

20
21 Councilmember Floreen,
22 And, Paul, you didn't tell us about your project. Just wow us for a second.

23
24 Paul Kominers,
25 My project was in theoretical mathematics and graph theory. And I was essentially
26 working with a system of operations called CHIP Firing, which in terms -- which has
27 some very cool behaviors, but in terms of actually doing research in this case,
28 amounted to drawing circles and lines on a piece of paper and moving [inaudible] chips
29 around.

30
31 Councilmember Floreen,
32 Thank you, Montgomery County Public Schools. With that we'll have this -- let's see I
33 have fancy little certificates. Paul, thank you. And we have Damjan; here you go. And
34 let's see here, Yang Yang. And then we have Louis, and Ben. Congratulations. And now
35 we have to have the ceremonial picture. Why don't you scoot up and squash in.

36
37 President Knapp,
38 Congratulations to all of our initial set of awardees, and thank you for explaining in
39 language that some of us could understand. Our next proclamation is in recognition of
40 the Quince Orchard Boys Cross Country Team and the Quince Orchard Girls Soccer
41 Team for winning state titles. And both Councilmember Andrews and I will be making
42 those proclamations. So I think we will do the girls soccer team first. So come on up
43 everybody.



December 11, 2007

1 Vice President Andrews,
2 Can we have the principal of Quince Orchard High School join us, too, if she's not here -
3 - Carol Working. I saw her. And the Athletic Director John Lubinetski, and the head
4 coach. There you are. Okay, great. All right. And Councilmember Knapp -- President
5 Knapp is here somewhere. There we go. Well we have behind me the state champs in
6 girls soccer for this year, winning a thrilling overtime -- triple overtime penalty kickoff 3-2
7 to win the state title. And it has been quite a remarkable two years for the Quince
8 Orchard Cougars winning this; just winning the football, winning baseball a year and a
9 half ago or so. We are going to celebrate the boys cross country encore performance
10 this year, and the girls field hockey won a couple years ago, as well. And you guys won
11 five or six years ago -- 2002 I think, so this is a repeat for you. The Montgomery County
12 students are doing great in the classroom and on the playing fields; it's sort of the Greek
13 ideal of a healthy mind and healthy body. And this team I know has a lot of sophomores
14 and juniors so we can expect great things again I would bet next year. But
15 congratulations on a terrific season. There was an incredible write-up in the Gazette
16 showing the moment where Maureen -- where's Maureen? Where Maureen [inaudible]
17 kicked the decisive penalty kick for the 3-2 kickoff victory. So congratulations. That was
18 a thrilling moment as the picture shows. Everybody is about to jump on you. All right. I'll
19 read the proclamation on behalf of the County Council. Whereas, championship
20 seasons are the result of hard work, focus, and determination -- qualities that Quince
21 Orchard High School girls soccer team demonstrated in abundance in its run to the
22 2007 Maryland 4A State championship ; and whereas, over the years, the Quince
23 Orchard High School girls soccer team, which previously won a state title in 2002 and
24 was a state finalist in 2006, has demonstrated how to win and lose with dignity and
25 grace, winning this year's championship, 1-0 -- a scoreless game until the kickoffs --
26 over C. Milton Wright by having a 3-2 advantage in the penalty kick shootout after
27 regulation and two overtimes were scoreless; and whereas, the Cougars this year
28 finished 17-2, won the Maryland 4A West Region championship, averaged over 3 goals
29 per game, allowed only 20 goals and shut out five opponents; and whereas, this year
30 the Cougars set team single-season records of 17 wins, 56 goals, 46 assists and 10
31 consecutive victories; and whereas, throughout the season the team demonstrated hard
32 work and dedication under the outstanding leadership of coaches Peg Keiller, Sean
33 Keiller and Alison O'Connor; and whereas, all the players, coaches, their families and
34 supporters deserve hearty congratulations for setting their sights high and realizing their
35 dreams. Now, therefore be it resolved that the County Council of Montgomery County,
36 Maryland, hereby proclaims congratulations and salutes Quince Orchard High School
37 girls soccer team, and be it further resolved that the Montgomery County Council joins
38 with the entire Quince Orchard High School community in recognizing this wonderful
39 achievement of bringing home another championship banner to Quince Orchard and to
40 Montgomery County, presented this 11th day of December of this year, signed by
41 Michael Knapp, Council President. Congratulations everybody, great job.
42 Congratulations, coach.

43
44 Peg Keiller,



December 11, 2007

1 Thank you.

2
3 Vice President Andrews,
4 I'm sure you would like to say a few words about the team.

5
6 Peg Keiller,
7 Sure, I'd love to. I'm very proud of this team. They are great sportsmen -- sportswomen,
8 classy on the field, besides being very skilled. I had a nice job this year because I have
9 to say I didn't have to work that hard. They pushed themselves. They worked very hard.
10 They were very driven, and they deserve all the accolades that have come to them.
11 They have worked very hard. In addition, I know they don't feel like it after the previous
12 presentation, but they are also a very bright group of girls. Team GPA over 3.8, and
13 everybody on the honor roll. We are very proud of these girls. Thank you for bringing us
14 here and honoring us.

15
16 Vice President Andrews,
17 Pleasant news. One of the great things we can do. Now the challenging part. This will
18 be harder than season and that is getting all in one picture.

19
20 President Knapp,
21 Now we get to do the cross-country team and so I would ask the boys to come up and
22 join me. As a former cross-country runner, I have a special appreciation for teams that
23 can win state championships, because I wasn't on one that was ever even close. I've
24 watched you all from a distance because I -- Coach [inaudible] has invited me to go to
25 her class at Northwest on a regular basis, and so I have gone to a number of cross-
26 country meets. And so at each meet I watched the team in red clearly excelling over
27 everyone else. And so it has been a tremendous, tremendous year. Recognize the
28 Seann Pelkey, the coach, and Steve Majkrzak, the assistant coach. Okay, Steve's not
29 here. This has truly been a team of domination. The last two years, consecutive state
30 titles. If anyone has gone to a cross-country meet in Montgomery County or in the
31 region, this team has really just excelled. It's amazing to watch the number of runners
32 they have in the top 10 and in the top 20; just clearly one of excellence. And so let me
33 just quickly walk through the team so everyone knows who is here. Neal Darmedy who
34 is the reigning 3200 meter champion, and has been running for what -- how many years
35 now?

36
37 Neal Darmedy,
38 I've been competing for two years.

39
40 President Knapp,
41 Competing for two years. Dave Larada. Artum Panasinkov. Michael Megdal. Not shy.
42 Josh Jossum. Ryan Prevalus. Sorry if I butcher everyone's names. Christopher Lasco,
43 another shy one; and Wayne Bartholomew. Congratulations. I will present you with the
44 proclamation. Whereas, championship seasons are the result of hard work, focus and



December 11, 2007

1 determination -- qualities the Quince Orchard High School boys cross country team
2 demonstrated in abundance in its run to the 2007 Maryland 4A State championship; and
3 whereas, over the years, the Quince Orchard High School boys cross-country team has
4 demonstrated that it is indeed a deep program with dedicated runners, having won the
5 state championship for the second consecutive year; and whereas, the Cougars this
6 year again won the championships at Maryland State 4A, the Class 4A West Region
7 and the Montgomery County meets and also finished first in the prestigious Peter
8 Garaghty and Glory Days invitational meets; and whereas, the Cougars won this year's
9 state title by a 47-117 margin over the next closest school by placing three runners
10 among the top 10 individual finishers; and whereas, throughout the season the team
11 demonstrated hard work and dedication under the outstanding leadership of Head
12 Coach Seann Pelkey and Assistant Coach Steve Majkrzak; and whereas, all the
13 runners, coaches, their families and supporters deserve hearty congratulations for
14 setting their sights high, realizing their dreams and being part of a program that has won
15 five state titles since 1992; now, therefore be it resolved that the County Council of
16 Montgomery County, Maryland, hereby proclaims congratulates and salutes the Quince
17 Orchard High School boys cross-country team; and be it further resolves that the
18 Montgomery County Council joins with the entire Quince Orchard High School
19 community in recognizing this wonderful achievement of bringing home another
20 championship banner to Montgomery County; presented this 11th day of December in
21 the year 2007; Michael Knapp, Council President.

22
23 Seann Pelkey,

24 Obviously, thank you very much for this recognition. Congratulations once again to the
25 girls' soccer team and also to our football team. To be able to play a role in such a
26 magical fall at Quince Orchard is a great honor. It's a testament to our athletic
27 administration. It's a testament to our supportive high school as a whole to know that we
28 know how to win, but we know how to win the right way. And there's so many negatives
29 out there in the world that to see some positives like this, like these young ladies and
30 these young men here, really is something special. So they deserve the recognition to
31 be able to line up seven seniors on the line at the state meet and to know on that day
32 that was the day that their goals and dreams were fulfilled that they set for themselves
33 very early in their high school careers really meant a lot to us as a program and to us as
34 coaching staff. Thank you very much.

35
36 President Knapp,

37 Thank you very much.

38
39 Seann Pelkey,

40 And actually on behalf of the team, one of our captains, Chris Lasko, would like to say
41 thanks.

42
43 President Knapp,

44 Great.



December 11, 2007

1
2 Chris Lasko,

3 I'd very much like to thank our Principal, Ms. Working, and our Athletic Director, Mr.
4 Lubineski, for supporting us at our state meet. They were both there and made the nice
5 hour and 15-minute trek. And especially one of our science teachers at Q.O., Mr.
6 Detlefson, who, I think, came to every single cross-country meet. He was very
7 supportive. But most of us, I would like to thank my team. Because we have known
8 each other for three or four years, and we have created some awesome bonds. Cross-
9 country, you might not think of it as a team sport. It very much is. Thank you.

10
11 President Knapp,

12 Okay. Now that our presentations have concluded, we now turn to general business.

13
14 Councilmember Ervin,

15 A point of personal privilege, please.

16
17 President Knapp,

18 Ms. Ervin.

19
20 Councilmember Ervin,

21 Yes, I just wanted to make an announcement to the Council about an extraordinary
22 event that took place last night at Northwood High School where there were a lot of arts,
23 people and parents and young people to witness the unveiling of a piece of art that is
24 very important, and it's called the Four Panels of Hope; which depict some of the
25 concepts from a youthful offenders in-house program at the prison. And so Council Vice
26 President Phil Andrews' office was represented there last night by Lisa Mandel-Trupp,
27 Art Wallenstein was present. Class Acts Arts was the arts organization that worked with
28 these young people. Twelve participants ages 16 to 21 participated in an over eight-
29 month period of time from October 2006 through May 2007 to create a large-scale 16-
30 foot-wide mural that's now hanging in Northwood High School's foyer. And if anybody
31 ever gets the opportunity to go and see what art can do for young people who have
32 witnessed this power, it's quite extraordinary. And so I have photographs of it which
33 don't do it justice at all, but I will say that Art Wallenstein and Class Acts Arts will be
34 coming to the Council to ask us whether or not we will be interested in some of the art
35 that's being made in this same way in our newly reconstituted third floor facility. So if
36 anybody gets the opportunity to go by and see this, it's quite extraordinary. This is a
37 powerful testament to art and youth and community; and if anybody ever gets the
38 opportunity, I would welcome you to go by Northwood High School and take a look at
39 this piece of art.

40
41 President Knapp,

42 All right, thank you so much for bringing that our attention. It sounds like it was a
43 wonderful event last evening. Ms. Lauer?



December 11, 2007

1 Ms. Lauer,

2 Good morning. The Council is announcing its public hearing dates for the FY09 Capital
3 Budget and Capital Improvements program. It will be held on February 5th, 6th, 7th at
4 7:00 p.m. We do have a few additions to the consent calendar this morning. We're
5 adding introduction of a Special Appropriation to the Maryland National Capital Park and
6 Planning Commission's Capital Budget and CIP Amendment, \$4.9 million for Silver
7 Place. The public hearing is scheduled for January 22nd at 1:30. We have added action
8 on a resolution to amend 16-164, the resolution designating Amenities for
9 Noncompetitive Award status. This is for Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind. Introduction
10 of a supplemental appropriation for the County's Capital Budget, \$2.2 million for
11 Germantown Business Incubator; that again is scheduled for a public hearing on
12 January 15th at 1:30. Special appropriation of the County government's FY08 Capital
13 Budget, Department of Recreation, \$560,000 for Wheaton Community Rec Center;
14 public hearing January 15th at 1:30.

15
16 President Knapp,

17 Thank you very much.

18
19 Ms. Lauer,

20 We do have a petition that we did receive. Residents supporting Zoning Text
21 Amendment 07-15, and they are urging that the Zoning Ordinance be amended to
22 waive all fees for neighborhood signs.

23
24 President Knapp,

25 Thank you. Madam Clerk, do we have any minutes for approval?

26
27 Council Clerk,

28 We have the minutes of November 27th for approval.

29
30 President Knapp,

31 Is there a motion?

32
33 Councilmember Ervin,

34 So moved.

35
36 President Knapp,

37 Moved by Councilmember Ervin. Is there a second?

38
39 Councilmember Berliner,

40 Second.

41
42 President Knapp,

43 Seconded by Councilmember Berliner. All in favor? That is unanimous among those
44 present. Thank you. Consent calendar. Is there a motion for the consent calendar?



December 11, 2007

Councilmember Trachtenberg,
Uh-huh.

President Knapp,
Moved by Councilmember Trachtenberg.

Councilmember Ervin,
Second.

President Knapp,
Seconded by Councilmember Ervin. Are there any comments? Mr. Leventhal.

Councilmember Leventhal,
I do, Mr. President. I wanted to comment on two items on the consent calendar, thank you. For those who were not listening last week, I just wanted to again express my enthusiasm about Item B; this is the resolution to establish a working group to study the potential generation of bio-diesel fuel from county restaurant grease. I believe this is a win-win-win for the restaurant industry, for the County and for the environment. Again, I did mention this last week, but sometimes it bears repetition. This was brought to us by the Montgomery County Student Environmental Activists. I think it will be a landmark model program when the working group of several county agencies, including advice from the private sector comes back to us a one-year time frame. That's a short timeframe for government, but I think it is reasonable and practical. The city of San Francisco, California, recently announced that it was embarking upon the very same effort to get restaurant grease from its restaurants and refine it into bio-diesel that would be used to fuel city vehicles, and also made available to the private sector. So we are not the first in the nation to embark on this, but we are one of a select few that I think are making major strides towards the development of alternative fuels and sustainable mechanisms to power our economy and our government. So I'm excited about it. Everybody knows I'm excited about it because I've mentioned it twice.

Councilmember Floreen,
Eat more French fries.

Councilmember Leventhal,
If you keep watching Council meetings, you'll see there's certain themes, you know, that keep rearing their head. And the second thing I wanted to comment on is also consistent with work that I have been doing for some time, and that's Item C; the appointment of the Grants Advisory Group. And I'm debating at this moment, Mr. President, whether I want to pull this from the consent calendar and request a recorded vote. And I'm going to make some remarks and we'll see what the will of the Council is when I'm done. Basically, I know that no one is happy, and when I say no one, I mean no one in the community, as well as no one on this side of the dais, as well no one on



December 11, 2007

1 the other side of the street with the mechanism that we have for awarding support to
2 nonprofit organizations that do critically important work in the community, meeting vitally
3 important social needs -- a range of needs from foster families to the homeless to
4 people with developmental disabilities to the elderly. And there's never enough money
5 to go around, and so there are always complaints. What we have done over many,
6 many years here now is tried to improve the process, make it fairer, more transparent,
7 and provide communities groups with an opportunity to apply, and provided this Council
8 with educated and thoughtful input from community volunteers. I just want to be very
9 clear here. If there are Councilmembers who do not like this process, please do not vote
10 for Item C. Please do not put us through this exercise. Please do not get these
11 community volunteers to devote months of their time to give us input, which is what
12 we're asking for -- Councilmember Trachtenberg and I have asked for in this resolution,
13 which is before the Council by consent. Please don't vote for this if you don't want to go
14 through this. We decided in the MFP Committee and the HHS Committee that this was
15 the best we had available to us for this year. Was it a perfect process? I'm thoroughly
16 convinced there is no perfect process. I'm thoroughly convinced there is no perfect
17 process. We will never give a grant to everyone who asks for one. We will always have
18 some disappointed parties at the end of the day. But we have gotten complaints in the
19 past from participants in this group who said why did you put us through this when you
20 don't care about our input and you don't really believe in this? So we had a reasonable
21 process this year. We had too little money to give out in the calendar year for fiscal 08 --
22 adoption of the fiscal 08 budget. If we're going to go through this for FY09, let's agree
23 we are going to go through it. If you don't support it then don't appoint this group. If
24 we're going to keep hedging and going back and forth and having -- expressing concern
25 and reservations about the process, that sends the wrong signal to the community,
26 which is applying for this support, and to the community volunteers who are on this
27 group. So this may -- this is going to come up again later this morning for discussion this
28 same topic, and so I'm -- so number one, I'm suggesting that Councilmembers not put
29 this on the consent calendar if we don't intend to go through with this process. If
30 Councilmembers are going to express unhappiness or a lack of support or yank their
31 support or withdraw their support through the process, let's not appoint these
32 hardworking volunteers this morning. And I'll have more to say on this topic later this
33 morning when the Spending Affordability Guidelines come before us.

34
35 President Knapp,
36 Councilmember Trachtenberg.

37
38 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
39 Thank you, President Knapp. I am not unhappy with the process that we were able to
40 outline. I think I've been pretty clear, and I know I was during the budget process last
41 year that I would hope in time -- in the future, we'd be actually able to centralize a grants
42 office function, and that we would actually be able to prioritize the awarding of funds
43 around department objectives. And I'm thinking specifically to the department in Health
44 and Human Services. I again know I have raised this publicly, and what I just want to



December 11, 2007

1 share this morning is that, you know, I know I speak for my colleagues when I indicate
2 the appreciation that we all have for the volunteers who have stepped forward and for
3 the work that was done last year and the work that will be done this year with this
4 process. But I for one at least for now am happy with the process, but again, I would
5 hope that as we move forward we're able to actually identify again with the County
6 Executive a process that I think is not only more inclusive, but that makes more
7 commonsense based on the needs and objectives that we have here in the community.

8
9 President Knapp,
10 Council Vice President Andrews.

11
12 Councilmember Andrews,

13 Thank you, Mr. President. If I was wearing a hat I would take it off to Councilmember
14 Leventhal and Councilmember Trachtenberg for their leadership in this area. This is not
15 an easy issue. A lot of people have very strong feelings about it. We all know it's going
16 to be a difficult year fiscally. But I do think that the Grants Advisory Group has played a
17 useful role, and I have been very impressed by many of their comments, and I think
18 their comments are helpful. So I support the appointment of this Grants Advisory Group
19 with enthusiasm, and I base my decisions on which grant applications I support largely
20 on their comments. So thank you both, Mr. and Ms. Chairman, for your leadership and
21 moving us this far.

22
23 President Knapp,

24 I would just add my comments with that of the Vice President. Five years ago when I got
25 to this Council our grants process was completely ad hoc, and so there was no rhyme
26 nor reason. And so the efforts of Councilmember Leventhal, Councilmember Praisner,
27 and within the new Council, Councilmember Trachtenberg, I think what is out there now
28 is a much more straightforward transparent process than has been in history. Can it be
29 improved upon? Undoubtedly. Is it much, much better than it was? Tremendously so.
30 And so I also enthusiastically support our Grants Advisory Group for the effort that they
31 will commit, for the information they will provide us so that we can make
32 recommendations at the end of the day; and it is my hope that what we have done now
33 is also clearer to the grants community so that they have an understanding of what the
34 process is. We will continue to work with them to refine it and improve upon it, but I think
35 it is much clearer, and I think that they understand it better now than they ever have in
36 the past. And I think part of that you can tell the success of that by the number of
37 organizations that now apply. And so I think that's certainly a good measure that the
38 word is out there, that this is a place -- how to proceed. And so I appreciate the efforts
39 of my colleagues to get it to this point. We will talk more about this when we get to
40 Spending Affordability in a few moments. I would also want -- changing gears a little bit,
41 we have in the consent is the end-of-year transfer, and in the end-of-year transfer of
42 appropriations, there are a number of fairly large ticket items. Councilmember Floreen
43 raised the issue as it relates to libraries last week and there's some information to her
44 request in the packet. But as we begin to look at the -- to review this year's budget for



December 11, 2007

1 potential reductions between three departments, you're looking at 1.7, 4.2, almost \$5.5
2 million. And I would be curious to get some feedback from the Executive Branch when
3 those recommendations come over for whatever additional reductions they may be
4 proposing this year as to how these departments that already -- that had significant
5 amounts of money at the end of this current fiscal year -- this previous fiscal year, why
6 they won't have similar overages in the coming year, so we can at least take that into
7 account and may make appropriate actions as necessary. Also, there are a number of
8 supplemental or special appropriations that have been added to the consent calendar. I
9 want to be clear that they have been added for introduction. Last week, we actually
10 deferred action on a \$200,000 supplemental appropriation expecting to take that up in
11 the fuller context as we look at proposed budget reductions or budget modifications.
12 And I would hold these supplemental or special appropriations in the same light so that
13 we are looking at all of our budget decisions in one context and not taking one off
14 decisions. And so they're there for introduction for purpose of discussion, but I don't
15 expect any action until we take action on a broader budget package in
16 January/February timeframe. I see no other questions. We have before us the consent
17 calendar. All those in favor? Any opposed? Passes - it's unanimous among those
18 present. We now have before us a briefing on the results of a 2007 Montgomery County
19 Residents Survey that was conducted on the County's behalf by the National Research
20 Center. We have Mr. Tom Miller who has joined us from the National Research Center.
21 For my colleagues' benefit, there was a press conference that I participated in with the
22 County Executive at 9:00 this morning to present the results of this survey to the media,
23 and hopefully broader distribution. All of my colleagues should have had this information
24 in their packet over the weekend to take a look at, and we have a slide presentation that
25 Mr. Miller will walk us through. Mr. Farber, do you have any additional comments to
26 make?

27
28 Mr. Farber,

29 No, this survey is the result of a great deal of work by the Management and Fiscal
30 Policy Committee in the last Council. And this was an excellent collaborative exercise
31 between the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch, and we're delighted to have
32 this first survey in 13 years done.

33
34 President Knapp,

35 Great. Turn it over to Mr. Miller for his presentation.

36
37 Mr. Miller,

38 Thank you, President Knapp and members of Council. I'm Tom Miller and President of
39 the National Research Center. My name is Tom Miller; I'm President of National
40 Research Center. We are the organization that did this what we call a citizens survey.
41 This is a broad, representative sounding of residents of the entire Montgomery County. I
42 was thinking when we were doing this press conference that I often talk about how
43 these surveys are similar to the kinds of surveys that are done in the best companies.
44 And I think one thing that makes these different is that while companies often ask their



December 11, 2007

1 consumers what they think about services that they are receiving and use those data to
2 improve services just as I think is the intention here in Montgomery County, they don't
3 have to do it in public. And so I think what makes this extremely different is that this is
4 really a measure of accountability a certain way that in the private sector there is no
5 requirement for at least consumer attitudes. So I think this is intended to be at least the
6 first sounding I know after a considerable period of time with the possibility of periodic
7 surveys where you will get to hear from a representative sample of the public. One thing
8 I think it's important to remember is that about only 22 to 23% of the residents who
9 responded to this survey had been to a public hearing in the last 12 months. And rather
10 than raise that as a failing in any way, I think what that really tells us is that the other
11 77% or so of the folks are the folks that you don't often to get to hear from. So this is a
12 sample of a different voice than the kind of or the number and particular folks that you
13 usually hear from, which is not to disparage those who come in to spend time with you.
14 But they tend to be folks who are more well-healed, who are healthier, who have
15 something to get from Council, and so listening to the public-at-large gives you a
16 different way of understanding. We think this is one window in to performance
17 measurement. We know that you have many others, and that that's a real concern of
18 Council. And that this is really an opportunity to evaluate your policies and programs,
19 not just now, but over time as you implement changes that are intended to focus on
20 improvements that you'd like to make as a result of seeing these data that those
21 improvements could be tracked as to their success in the perspectives of your
22 residents. So while I'm not pushing buttons, I suppose if I say the next slide that would
23 be good enough. Thank you very much. Broadly, the survey was undertaken to assess
24 the quality of life and quality of services in Montgomery County, and to understand what
25 the priorities of residents are. This survey was sent to over 3,000 households. It was
26 done by mail starting in September. We had a strong response rate, especially for urban
27 area of about 32% of residents who did participate; over 900 responses which gives us
28 what we call a margin of error of about 3 percentage points around any percent that
29 we'll talk about. As I mentioned in this press conference that you all didn't have an
30 opportunity to attend, there were some extraordinary measures taken to bring in the
31 voice of folks who don't speak English as their first language or prefer to speak another
32 language. And so the survey was translated into Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese,
33 Korean, and French, and offered with a paragraph and a phone number for folks to call,
34 and there were people on the other side of that phone who spoke the language and
35 were able to send out the appropriate survey to those folks. Yes.

36
37 President Knapp,

38 Before you leave that slide, Councilmember Floreen had a question.

39
40 Councilmember Floreen,

41 Thank you. In the box at the bottom there you talk about the results being weighted by
42 age, gender and ethnicity. What exactly does that mean?

43
44 Mr. Miller,



December 11, 2007

1 Whenever a survey is done, whether it's by mail or phone, the sample of folks who
2 choose to participate tends not to be a perfect demographic reflection of the County as
3 we understand it from other sources such as census data. So generally speaking, we
4 tend to get -- and everybody who does survey research tends to get older folks and
5 folks who are more well off, folks who tend to own their properties rather than rent, folks
6 who -- generally white folks rather than people of color; and to make sure that the
7 representation that we're offering you in these survey results reflect the demographic
8 profile of the County. Those data are re-weighted to get closer to what's understood to
9 be the demographics of the County as a whole. And that's what the re-weighting does.

10
11 Councilmember Floreen,

12 Well does that -- I looked at -- you say that in the report, and I see your explanation of
13 that in the end, and I just -- I guess I was just curious. Did that mean that you adjusted
14 the responses on everything to reflect the percentage?

15
16 Mr. Miller,

17 Yes, the re-weighting basically says if there's an under-representation of let's say Latino
18 residents where they represent really 10% of the population but only 5% of the survey
19 respondents were Latino, we would bring their voice up to the appropriate percent up to
20 10%.

21
22 Councilmember Floreen,

23 And that would be with respect to response to whatever they responded to.

24
25 Mr. Miller

26 That's correct, so it's reflected throughout.

27
28 Councilmember Floreen,

29 Thank you.

30
31 Mr. Miller,

32 In terms of the characteristics of the respondents, there certainly is a great longevity in
33 folks who have lived here and who responded to the survey. Over 43% lived here more
34 than 20 years. Diversity of age with 40% of households with children living there at the
35 same time, almost a quarter with older adults 65 and over, and a diversity of
36 background with a third of residents speaking a language other than English at home
37 and having not been born in the United States. And in terms of their commuting
38 averages, they were about a half hour with about two-thirds of the folks who commuted
39 outside their house traveling in single-occupied vehicles - SOV's is the shorthand for
40 that. In the next slide, and I just ought to say that there is a dissertation worth of data
41 here, and we are just going to go through the highlights today. And I didn't offer, but I'm
42 glad you've already decided that if there are any questions as I go through, please feel
43 free to ask. These are the overall findings in a set of questions we asked about quality
44 of community life. And this is the percentage of residents who gave ratings of excellent



December 11, 2007

1 or good on an excellent/good/fair/poor scale. These are quite strong ratings as you can
2 see from place to work to overall quality of life. The lower number of 41% giving
3 Montgomery County an excellent or good rating as a place to retire is honestly a kind of
4 profile that we often see in fast-growing, attractive and relatively expensive places; that
5 these places get high ratings for quality of life and relatively lower ratings for a place to
6 retire. There's something else I wanted to mention, and it's something you can find as
7 you look in the results that -- broadly there were not big differences in responses among
8 people of color and white respondents and white residents. And I mention that because
9 often across the country, it's not the kind of result that we see. And in a way, it's a way
10 to think about equity of service delivery from the perception of your residents. And while
11 I think it was discussed a little bit at the press conference that new Americans might be
12 more likely to appreciate the services they receive, we don't often see such strong
13 positive ratings of people of color when they're compared to Caucasian residents. And it
14 did stick out in our reading of this, and so I wanted to bring it to your attention. And I
15 don't want to make more out of it than just to reflect that that's something that's a little bit
16 less typical than what we usually see. In terms of community characteristics, we asked
17 about 24 questions, and these are the ones that received the highest ratings and the
18 lowest ratings. And this is the percentage of residents who gave ratings as excellent or
19 good. And in the top, you can see the image reputation of Montgomery County being
20 right up there. Overall appearance was very strong. Openness and acceptance of
21 community toward people of diverse backgrounds, and then towards the bottom, and at
22 the bottom, the affordability of housing, child care, ease of car travel; and I think these
23 are themes that come frankly throughout the results if you read them the way we are, et
24 cetera. And there's a longer list that you can see in the document. In terms of safety, a
25 very high percentage of folks give strong positive ratings of safety, and actually this is
26 not something I had mentioned before. And but we had been looking at Montgomery
27 County, and some of you may know that Rockville is also one of our clients. And we
28 have remarked in other places that these strong positive ratings for safety are notable
29 given the sniper shootings that occurred here some long time ago. But often people ask
30 us how long do we think particular environmental issues will endure in the ratings and
31 the perceptions of residents? And we don't exactly know that, but we often point to this
32 area of the country as a place that shows how quickly this can rebound to positive
33 ratings of safety in this case. I suppose if there's one area to pay attention to, this
34 feeling of safety in Montgomery County in the downtown after dark, only 49% say that
35 they felt very safe or somewhat safe. About 31% said that they felt very or somewhat
36 unsafe. And as I said in the press conference, often these survey results stimulate
37 questions about why, and this might be one. In the next -- .

38
39 Councilmember Ervin,
40 I have a question.

41
42
43 Mr. Miller,
44 Certainly.



December 11, 2007

Councilmember Ervin,

I'm just interested in terms of how you gathered your data, how many people actually told you they went to the downtown areas in Montgomery County. I find that a very interesting data point and how you got to that.

Mr. Miller,

It's a great question and one that really permeates all of these service ratings, if you will, both about service delivery and about community quality. We asked people what they think about fire service or EMS, and many people have an opinion. And then there's a certain percent who don't have an opinion. What we've done is removed the folks who said they don't know and give you the percentage of folks who are willing to give their opinion. So this is of those who have an opinion, this is the percent. But at the same time I would acknowledge that not everybody gets their opinion from actual first-hand observation.

Councilmember Ervin,

Right. And that could be said for a lot of these.

Mr. Miller,

Yes, it could.

Councilmember Ervin,

Okay. All right.

Mr. Miller,

We often say that if you have the best garbage collection by all objective standards, you pick it up three times a day and you roll out a red carpet to the curb, and people don't admire your garbage collection the way they should; there's still something there for you to pay attention to. In terms of growth, we asked about three kinds of growth; population growth, growth in commercial areas, and job growth. And here you can see that a very large percentage of folks feel that population growth is too fast, and at the same time there's a plurality of folks who feel that job growth is too slow, 41%. And that is a kind of profile that we often see except with a much higher percentage of folks saying that job growth is too slow. So the fact that it is only 41 % say that job growth is too slow here is frankly a relatively strong marker of how good the economy must be. But there is, we find across the country, something of a disconnect between understanding that if you have good, strong job growth it's likely to encourage population growth. And I don't think anybody has found an easy way to get around that honestly. But it does end up, I think, having an impact on what people think about how well things are being planned in the community when they see very fast population growth, especially when there's traffic congestion and that kind of thing. That will reflect on elected officials and staff members.

Councilmember Floreen,



December 11, 2007

1 I have a question on that one, too. Can you tell from your survey on the growth one --
2 the one you just had up there if you can put that back -- whether the people who had
3 their views about commercial growth were the same ones that said that jobs' growth
4 was too slow or at the right level? Because there's an inherent -- I mean, that's where
5 people work, in offices, stores and restaurants. And certainly the population growth
6 people have a point of view however it's characterized. But the differences in
7 perspective on those second two lines is interesting to me.

8
9 Mr. Miller,

10 It's a good point. And we didn't do the analysis but we have to data to permit it so that
11 we could do that cross-classification and see if they are the same people.

12
13 Councilmember Floreen,
14 Sure, thanks.

15
16 Councilmember Ervin,
17 I'm sorry, before you go, can I ask -- this is out of order but -- in terms of the slides, but it
18 just occurred to me -- I just wanted to know were these telephone interviews?

19
20 Mr. Miller,
21 These were mail surveys.

22
23 Councilmember Ervin,
24 Mail surveys, okay. And so -- that's interesting.

25
26 Mr. Miller,
27 These days mailed surveys tend to get higher response rates than phone surveys. And
28 for these kinds of surveys, they also get more candid responses. When we do phone
29 surveys of these kinds of questions the ratings tend to be higher, and in part that's
30 predicted because of research that talks about the transaction between people. And
31 when you talk to another person it's like going out to dinner and you've had a dinner
32 you've been remarking about how poorly it sat with you, and the waiter or waitress asks
33 how it is and you say fine, and I think it's those kinds of conditions that make phone
34 survey give you a -- we think an unfairly high estimation of quality. In terms of county
35 services, we asked about 35 different services, and these are the ones that received the
36 highest ratings and the ones that received the lowest ratings. And these are the
37 percentage of folks who gave excellent or good. And so Fire/EMS at the top with
38 recycling and public library not shown. But also on the list would be county garbage
39 collection and parks, Montgomery College, the police department, all these receiving
40 ratings of 81% or higher from residents who had an opinion. And I want to say again
41 that not everybody had an opinion and so we removed the percentage who said don't
42 know, although you can see all that in the appendix to the report, so you can see the
43 exact distribution. Down towards the bottom along with the 3 or 4 that we're showing
44 you there were street repair, preservation of natural areas, and services for immigrants;



December 11, 2007

1 those received lower ratings in the 40's. And the next slide because we asked about
2 importance and we asked about quality, we were able to look at the cross-classification
3 of those things, and these were three of the services that showed higher ratings for
4 importance, but relatively lower ratings for quality. And the reason we bring it to your
5 attention is often because there are so many data points in these surveys, it's hard to
6 know where to start. And while we're not recommending from any goal-setting or
7 strategic perspective where you ought to start, this is purely from a numbers
8 perspective. This is -- these are some of the services that seem to be high on the list of
9 importance and lower on the list of quality. For emergency preparedness, the vast
10 majority of folks didn't really know. And so while this is a low quality rating, it's only from
11 a about a third of all the residents who gave an opinion.

12
13 President Knapp,
14 Mr. Leventhal.

15
16 Councilmember Leventhal,

17 Yeah. Very helpful data and enormously interesting; we're all consumers of poll data, so
18 appreciate this. This is high quality effort here. The last slide stated that a lot of folks
19 were frustrated with the quality of cable service and aptly noted that cable service is not
20 a County-provided service. I wonder about health services, because the County does
21 provide some health services mostly to very low-income people. When you think about
22 Montgomery County as a place to live it's somewhat different than when you think about
23 Montgomery County as a government that is providing services. And I just wonder when
24 you talk about health services -- when I think about health services in the County what
25 comes to my mind first are hospitals, which are not run by the County. Can you delve a
26 little deeper; who are we talking about when we talk about health services in the
27 county?

28
29 Mr. Miller,

30 I think you raise an important point. Often, especially for counties, services are delivered
31 that are also delivered by cities or by some other jurisdiction level -- states or even
32 federal government. Once we asked folks who they thought delivered mail to them, and
33 about 25% of this local government's residents thought it was the local government who
34 was delivering mail. So folks really don't know often the level of service. We did just use
35 the phrase "health services".

36
37 Councilmember Leventhal,
38 Right.

39
40 Mr. Miller,

41 And so it would cut across all variety of health services, in my thinking, but honestly we
42 don't know the answer to that. And this, Councilmember Leventhal, might be another
43 place where digging deeper could get the answer. In the next slide, we gave
44 respondents a list of issues facing the County, and asked them to identify which were



December 11, 2007

1 the most important for the County to pay attention to, to fix if improvements were
2 needed; And these were the ones that came out as the top in terms of the percent who
3 rated these as essential or very important: crime and traffic, public schools, and pace of
4 growth. Towards the top also were taxes, by the way; and the environment, growth rate,
5 affordability, social services for those in need. We don't have this in the slide show, but
6 we did ask the people what they liked most about the County, and the top-rated things
7 were schools, parks and recreation, public safety, the appearance broadly. Thank you.
8 You're not supposed to read from slides, I know.

9
10 President Knapp,

11 Thank you. No, I think that as we said at the press conference earlier this morning, the
12 data that you have here is significant and gives us a good starting point to ask the why.
13 And I think it also, as I was asked during the press conference, how does the Council or
14 the County Executive actually begin to utilize this data, and I think as beginning early
15 next year, we are going to be faced with having to make various challenging budget
16 decisions. And when you go back and look at where do our County residents begin to
17 place their interests, I think it's important for us to take that into account, at least as a
18 data point when we start to figure out where do and don't make reductions or make
19 further investments. So I think also that this gives us, as I said last week, a way to begin
20 to figure out how to make -- to truly continue to be great. It's easy to say we have great
21 assets, we have tremendous resources, but how do we make sure that our residents
22 think that they live in a great community and we are providing them the level of service
23 that they expect and require. And I think this gives us a benchmark to be able to begin
24 to do that. And so this is our first survey in 13 years, and I don't know if we do this on an
25 annual basis or we do this every two years, but I think clearly the Council and the
26 Executive need to do this on a regular basis so we can see where we stand. Clearly
27 people like where they live, and they want to make sure that they continue to like where
28 they live. I thank you for taking the time to do this survey on our behalf, but also to take
29 the time and come share with us today the perspective and the pieces that is went into
30 gathering this data and the analysis that goes behind it. So I think this is very helpful.

31
32 Mr. Miller,

33 Thank you, President Knapp. I do want to say that your staff were extremely involved in
34 helping us to be sure that we were asking the questions the way you wanted them
35 asked and to make sure that the questions themselves were the questions that would
36 helpful to you; and that includes John Griner and Steve Farber, Joe Beach and Neal
37 Greenberger, they were all very helpful to us. Thank you.

38
39 President Knapp,

40 We have a couple questions starting with Councilmember Ervin.

41
42 Councilmember Ervin,

43 Thank you very much. I really appreciate all the hard work that went into the survey, and
44 mine is very marked up, and I noticed anecdotally looking, I showed up on page 94, and



December 11, 2007

1 I was very interested in reading the anecdotal other comments that you received from
2 the respondents. And I'm really curious about the age groups that responded to the
3 survey. Because it seems to me that where Montgomery County is in its sort of growth
4 is that there are two -- we are talking about two counties here, and you could slice that a
5 couple of different ways, by age, by race, class. And I found that there are a lot of
6 anecdotal comments about people who had lived in the county for a very long time who
7 weren't as satisfied with the way things were going in terms of too much crowding; we
8 like the County the way it was before; you know, very interesting comments from people
9 who raised their families here, who moved here in the late '50s or '60s; and then if you,
10 again anecdotally, read comments from people who are younger and who got here
11 more recently, it's a very interesting juxtaposition of where people are in terms of who
12 they are. So I don't know what the survey is saying about the respondents, their age,
13 what their responses were based on that; it's just a very interesting thing for me to look
14 at.

15
16 Mr. Miller,

17 Councilmember Ervin, there are some tables in the back that show some of the results
18 by age. And in my read of that, I didn't find that there was an overwhelming tendency for
19 older residents to give particularly more positive ratings than younger residents.
20 Although certainly in some cases they did, but it flip-flops. Sometimes the younger
21 residents gave more positive ratings. I think we often see, and especially here you have
22 a high percentage of folks who have lived here a long time, and longtime residents of
23 pretty much any community worry about what happened to that community that they
24 moved into. And so it doesn't surprise me that older residents would have some
25 concerns and worries, especially as the community grows and changes.

26
27 President Knapp,
28 Councilmember Berliner.

29
30 Councilmember Berliner,

31 Thank you, Council President. As I think you appreciate and I know my colleagues
32 appreciate part of what we have tasked Park and Planning to do is to marry quality of
33 life indicators into our annual growth policy. And I believe this gives us a very good start
34 with respect to that because it helps identify, and I know Park and Planning is here, and
35 I certainly am hopeful that they will integrate this piece into their work because as you
36 observed, I believe, at the last slide indicated the things that mattered most to
37 Montgomery County residents, which included parks and things of that nature. So I'm
38 very grateful for your work, and I think it will be important on an ongoing basis to help us
39 deal with this issue of growth and quality of life.

40
41 President Knapp,
42 Thank you. Councilmember Trachtenberg.

43
44 Councilmember Trachtenberg,



December 11, 2007

1 Thank you, President Knapp. I had two questions, Dr. Miller. One relates to the
2 percentage of participation, which I know at the press conference you indicated was a
3 high percentage. And I wondered if you could talk a little bit about that because typically
4 when people looking at research and even survey participation, certainly in research,
5 the bar is usually closer to 50%. So I wanted to give you the opportunity to talk about
6 why the 30% participation was very useful.

7
8 Mr. Miller,

9 Thank you. These days telephone surveys, which are surveys that often elected officials
10 are more familiar with because they are used in running for office, they can be done
11 much more quickly. And because they are focused mostly on voters, they will get a
12 reasonable response rate. That reasonable response rate tends, depending on how
13 quickly the survey must be done, how many dollars are thrown at that particular effort,
14 might get you 20 to 30% response by phone. It's hard sometimes to know what the
15 response rate is by phone because you or I would pay for a survey of 400 residents or
16 1,000 residents, and you get 400 or you get 1,000, and nobody unless they are really
17 looking deep into an appendix is going to understand that you had to call thousands and
18 thousands of phone numbers to get those people to respond. Now, having said that,
19 and making the distinction between mail and phone, when you look at mailed surveys,
20 we have had I think the highest response rate we have had with a three-contact
21 method, which this is, there's a postcard, then the survey is mailed out twice, more
22 contacts give you a higher response rate, and if you had all the time and money in the
23 world, you could get higher response rates. But you have to try to find the right balance.
24 So I think our highest response rate was 63% in a community where we were only
25 asking voters to respond, and voters tend to be older and more connected to their
26 community. Our response rates average somewhere between 25 and 40%, which also
27 takes into account the fact that some of the jurisdictions are smaller and they tend to get
28 larger response rates and the larger jurisdictions tend to get smaller response rates. So
29 our representation of 32% was a good response rate, reflects our experience in that,
30 and generally the research as we read it as to how mailed survey responses compare to
31 phone survey responses.

32
33 Councilmember Trachtenberg,

34 And the other is really more informational, it's not so much a question. I recall in reading
35 this summary that was provided to us that the one area where residents had most
36 difficulty really responding was around availability of addiction services. Is this not
37 correct?

38
39 Mr. Miller,

40 I think that's correct. A small percent knew the answer -- had an opinion to offer, I mean.

41
42 Councilmember Trachtenberg,

43 Right, which would clearly speak to the need for more outreach and education, and just
44 putting that into context, there was a recent SAMSA [inaudible] study that showed that



December 11, 2007

1 21% of the population that actually needs access to those services really have access.
2 That's a national number, of course. It varies from state to state, but I think it's
3 interesting to connect those two points, which is that people don't know what the
4 services are or what the quality could be. But yet, there are a number that actually need
5 the services for themselves or for people they know or family members. So just a
6 general comment, and I appreciate all the hard work that went into this. We talked about
7 the survey and the questions within the MFP Committee that I chair, so to see the result
8 is exciting. But again, this is really good information to use as a baseline for program
9 development. So thank you very much for all your hard work.

10
11 President Knapp,
12 Councilmember Elrich.

13
14 Councilmember Elrich,
15 I had a question looking at just some of the breakdown of the questions when you talk
16 about how many respondents there were, and then you give an answer for example
17 what people thought were important. So if 5% of your survey responds, that's 60 people.
18 So at what point does the number become too small to be statistically significant? I
19 mean, it's one thing if you got 3,000 responses out of this population. It's another thing
20 when to a specific question you're down to 40, 50, 60 responses.

21
22 Mr. Miller,
23 And that can happen, for example, and I think this is what you're talking about,
24 Councilmember Elrich, in the open-ended response and 5% of the people say it's
25 schools or something like that. The open-ended responses are a lot more difficult to put
26 a margin of error on especially as they get smaller and smaller. If you think of it as all
27 900 people had the opportunity to respond, only 60 out of 900 said this one thing, you
28 could put a margin of error around that. But I would be cautious about that. I think for
29 these margins of error that I'm talking about, they reflect the entire population, so it's a
30 question that's answered by pretty much everybody, close to 900 folks, 800 and some
31 folks. When you get down to many fewer, the reliability -- the statistical reliability
32 diminishes considerably.

33
34 Councilmember Elrich,
35 Thank you.

36
37 President Knapp,
38 Councilmember Andrews had a question, but we have lost him, so.

39
40 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
41 He can find Dr. Miller.

42
43 President Knapp,



December 11, 2007

1 We can find you. But no, I thank you again for your efforts. This really does provide us a
2 good benchmark to work with the Executive, and us as a good benchmark just in better
3 understanding how we continue to make our county a better place for our residents and
4 to really listen to our residents. We talked about that a little bit at the press conference
5 that a significant percentage don't necessarily think we're listening, and yet, they don't
6 necessarily engage either at some different points, and so it's difficult to make that
7 connection. But I think if anything, we need to see that they don't necessarily think we
8 are listening as well as we can, and we have to clearly build upon that. So I thank you.
9 Thank you for your efforts, thank you for the baseline you have given us, and hopefully
10 we will have further conversations in the coming months and we will come back and do
11 this again in the not-so-distant future.

12
13 Mr. Miller,
14 Thank you very much Councilmembers.

15
16 President Knapp,
17 Okay. We now -- this concludes our briefing. We now turn to legislative session, day
18 number 37. We have the approval of Legislative Journal. Do we have a journal for
19 approval? We have no journal to approve. We have three bills for introduction. The first
20 which is Bill 37-07, Forest Conservation Amendments, sponsored by the Council
21 President at the request of the Montgomery County Planning Board. The public hearing
22 is scheduled for January 22nd at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Elrich.

23
24 Councilmember Elrich,
25 I would like to make a brief comment on this item. This item includes both the Park and
26 Planning proposal and the amendments that will be coming forward from my office. And
27 I just wanted to let the Councilmembers know that in the very beginning there were two
28 tracks being taken on the Forest Conservation Bill. There was an effort coming out of
29 folks working around the C&O Canal Task Force, which morphed into a larger group
30 and purpose, and there was the effort being spun out of Park and Planning, and my
31 office was working on originally a separate draft Bill. And in the process of that we had
32 discussions with Park and Planning folks, and decided rather than bringing to the
33 Council two Bills with drastically different language possibly and different approaches,
34 that we should try to work together and come to as much common agreement on a
35 single approach. And so the Bill that comes from Park and Planning reflects our effort to
36 work with Park and Planning. And I would say it's about 90, 95% of where my office was
37 looking at going. Our amendments further strengthen some of the things that Park and
38 Planning has done. And our effort is to try to move a little bit closer to no net loss of
39 forest. We don't actually get to no net loss, but we move closer to no net loss. And I got
40 a phone call today from Vince Berg, who I think a number of you know who has been
41 working on one of the Governor's task forces, and in fact the Governor's task force is
42 going to be recommending that the State adopt a no-net loss of forest provision, which
43 can be achieved through either conservation or replanting or preservation of existing
44 forest stands. So our effort is simply to take the legislation a little bit beyond where Park



December 11, 2007

1 and Planning has gone. There are obviously going to be staffing implications that we
2 are aware of. But I just want to thank Park and Planning for what I thought was a very
3 cooperative and productive effort in getting the legislation to the point where it is.

4
5 President Knapp,
6 Thank you. Council Vice President Andrews.

7
8 Vice President Andrews,
9 I just wanted to be recorded as supportive of the approval of the Legislative Journal.

10
11 President Knapp,
12 Well, actually, we didn't have one, but thank. So noted.

13
14 Vice President Andrews,
15 If there was one, I would be supportive.

16
17 President Knapp,
18 We will hold that in advance so if you miss on future vote, we know that you've got. Bill
19 38-07, Moderately Priced Dwelling Units, MPDU Amendments, sponsored by the
20 Council President at the request of the County Executive. Public hearing for that -- for
21 Bill 38-07 is scheduled for January 29th at 7:30 p.m. I see no questions. And the Bill 39-
22 07, Agricultural Land Preservation Amendments, sponsored by the Council President at
23 the request of the County Executive, and the public hearing for that Bill will be
24 scheduled for January 15th at 1:30 p.m. And I see no questions. We now turn to District
25 Council session. We have one ZTA for introduction; it is 07-17, Growth Policy, Special
26 Exceptions and Local Zoning Map Amendments, sponsored by the Council President.
27 Just briefly, I have spoken to -- I think I've spoken to all the Councilmembers, and Jeff
28 has -- Mr. Zyontz has put together a good overview document in the packet for people's
29 review. This was brought to my attention by both Mr. Zyontz and the Hearing Examiner
30 in response to a recent Court of Appeals ruling, and some of the interpretations that the
31 Hearing Examiner felt that they were getting to and wanted to have clarification on the
32 part of the Council, and so this really addresses something that we did not take up in
33 the Growth Policy and wouldn't have in the past, but may need to. And so that's why it's
34 here for introduction, and we can discuss it further. I need to have a motion to set the
35 hearing.

36
37 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
38 So moved.

39
40 President Knapp,
41 And the resolution is to establish public hearing for January 29th at 7:30 p.m. The
42 motion -- moved by Councilmember Trachtenberg; seconded by Councilmember Elrich.
43 All in favor? That is unanimous among those present. Thank you. And we now turn to
44 action on resolution regarding Spending Affordability Guidelines for the FY09 Operating



December 11, 2007

1 Budget. I will start just by saying when Ms. Lauer and I were talking about scheduling of
2 this on the last day of Council session, she said she was going to schedule it for 45
3 minutes. And I said well there really won't be much to debate. And she said it doesn't
4 make a difference whether there's much to debate or not, it generally always takes 45
5 minutes. And over the course of the last two hours, we have found issues that will likely
6 take us 45 minutes to debate. Although I would urge my colleagues that let's have a
7 good and healthy discussion, but these are in fact the guidelines and we have a holiday
8 party coming up, so not that that should necessarily sway us, but I will put that out there
9 for people to keep in mind.

10
11 Chuck Sherer,
12 Also, a display of the finishes for the third-floor rooms.

13
14 President Knapp,
15 Well there you go. So I will now turn to the chair of the MFP Committee, Councilmember
16 Trachtenberg.

17
18 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
19 Okay. Thank you, President Knapp. Well, MFP seems to be where all the action is, and
20 that doesn't change. As the Council President indicated, we have a recommendation
21 from the MFP Committee regarding the Spending Affordability Guidelines for the FY09
22 Operating Budget. And there is both a packet item for your review, but an addendum as
23 well. And the addendum does a good job of summarizing what was discussed within the
24 committee yesterday as we tweaked our recommendation to all of you. If -- and I'm
25 assuming my colleagues have the addendum before them. In a nutshell, the
26 recommendation from the committee would recommend that the ceiling on the property
27 taxes be set at the charter limit to be achieved right now entirely by reducing the rates,
28 but, again, keeping in mind that the rates are set in a final phase in May and that
29 obviously we might decide to use some mix of the rates and credits. But the summary of
30 yesterday's discussion would include that the one change from three weeks before was
31 the addition of \$15.9 in state aid, and that reflects OMB's acceptance of a MCPS
32 estimate. And as a result, the allocation for the MCPS budget at maintenance of effort
33 increased. As in prior years, the committee noted that the revenues have usually
34 increased from the fall to the following spring, although we are waiting with baited
35 breath this year to see if that's the case. So again, what that means in terms of bottom
36 line is that what we approve in May might very well be greater than the fall allocations
37 that are indicated. I know in the addendum packet, there is a copy of a memo which I
38 circulated on December 4th about changing the process for the fall guidelines, and I just
39 want to put that in there as a piece of information to encourage my colleagues that
40 within the MFP Committee, January-February we expect to have a good conversation
41 about the manner in which to promote this guideline discussion, and clearly how do we
42 set them so that they are more meaningful, because I think it's a majority committee
43 opinion that we would like to see the guidelines themselves reflect more readily, really
44 what revenue is, but more importantly really what our options are and what is the



December 11, 2007

1 connection between that. The one change that was discussed yesterday within
2 committee regards some language to the resolution that relates to community grants.
3 That is actually outlined on the second page of the addendum. And I will just read it for
4 the record, which is that the Council's intent that \$4.0 million of the County
5 Government's allocation will be appropriated for community grants. This amount
6 excludes both community service grants and community empowerment grants with the
7 Executive approving specific grants totaling \$2.0 million and the Council approving
8 specific grants totaling an equal amount \$2.0 million. Originally when this was discussed
9 within committee -- actually this was after a discussion that I had with the Council
10 President, originally the 5 million number was put forward, and it was the committee
11 recommendation that we actually go with the 4, again, recognizing that we don't really
12 know exactly what the revenue is going to look like the first quarter of 2008. And we
13 also felt that we have some flexibility to adjust that amount if we needed to come next
14 May. So that in summary is what was discussed yesterday in addition to what had been
15 advanced prior to a public hearing with the exact numbers. And I just, again, would
16 underscore to colleagues that Council's action in improving this resolution doesn't limit
17 our ability to increase spending or to change allocations in the budget come next May.

18
19 President Knapp,

20 I thank you, chair of the MFP Committee, and I thank the committee's consideration of
21 the additional grants' language. I would turn to Mr. Berliner on the committee for any
22 additional comments.

23
24 Councilmember Berliner,

25 Only one, Council President, and I appreciate the opportunity. I, like my committee
26 chair, want to reinforce the notion that this is only my second budget, but this aspect of
27 our deliberations to me is the most meaningless part of our deliberations. And I do urge
28 us to seriously consider no longer having this conversation in this manner in this debate
29 and these votes because -- .

30
31 Councilmember Floreen,
32 Second.

33
34 Councilmember Berliner,

35 It is too early. It is meaningless -- .

36
37
38 Councilmember Trachtenberg,

39 [Inaudible] Nothing left for me to say.

40
41 Councilmember Berliner,

42 And that we could have disagreements about something that is essentially meaningless
43 is even more frustrating. So from my perspective going forward, this piece needs to be
44 redone such that we do in fact get briefed with respect to what our budget situation is,



December 11, 2007

1 we seek guidance from the community with respect to that, and then we move forward
2 with our process. We are not obligated to do this but by our own wall which we created
3 to establish this process. And I think we have lived under it long enough and that we
4 need to improve upon it, and we can and we should. So that's my only comment, which
5 is that I believe that this process does a disservice to all of us insofar as we end up
6 having debates about things that in the end don't matter because it isn't binding at all at
7 this stage of the process. We will have difficult decisions to make, no question about
8 that. And when we have to make those decisions, we will. This isn't one of those times.

9
10 President Knapp,
11 Thank you, Mr. Berliner. And I appreciate both the comments from the chair and the
12 committee member. And I believe I attended the last committee meeting -- not this
13 previous one but the one immediately proceeding, and Mr. Sherer had made a
14 recommendation many years ago as a way to -- pardon.

15
16 Mr. Sherer,
17 Nine years ago.

18
19 President Knapp,
20 Nine years ago -- as a way to potentially improve upon this process.

21
22 Mr. Sherer,
23 It's like wine; it gets better [inaudible].

24
25 President Knapp,
26 So I think it may be time to bring that proposal forward. So I appreciate the committee's
27 sentiments, and look forward to working with Mr. Sherer and the committee to try to
28 better refine what is a process in need of refinement. I will turn to -- actually, I have one
29 question as it related to the \$15.9 million in state aid. What is that addition a reflection
30 of?

31
32 Mr. Sherer,
33 That's the amount for the geographic cost of education index.

34
35 President Knapp,
36 So that what is assumed just occurred in a special session.

37
38 Mr. Sherer,
39 Yes, sir.

40
41 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
42 That's right.

43
44 President Knapp,



December 11, 2007

1 Okay, thank you very much. Mr. Leventhal.

2
3 Councilmember Leventhal,

4 Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate the hard work of the committee, and I appreciate
5 what I'm hearing from Mr. Berliner, which is some frustration that a lot of time and effort
6 goes into something that is only a guideline. Although I would just respond to Mr.
7 Berliner's point that even lawmakers are governed by the law, and if we choose to
8 change the law, we may choose to do that. But until such time as we do, we have to
9 comply with the law. What I want to speak to is unusual in this resolution in that I think it
10 is more binding and more significant than the most of the rest of the resolution, and that
11 is that the Council President proposed to the MFP Committee language that would
12 assist the Executive and Council in planning for the amount of grants that would be
13 made available on a discretionary basis to nonprofit organizations serving the needy.
14 And it was the Council President's view that his proposal would respond to feedback
15 that the Council received. We solicited input from nonprofit organizations, and we got
16 some very clear feedback. They wanted clear guidelines. They wanted a process that
17 they could understand. They wanted priority areas for giving out grants, which we did
18 not provide. And they wanted dollar amounts so they would know what we were
19 shooting for, which we did not provide. And the committee has discussed that quite
20 explicitly, and we came to the conclusion that we would not provide a dollar amount
21 because we didn't know what the budget scenario was going to be. Nevertheless, the
22 Council President thought it was a worthwhile exercise to propose a total of \$5 million to
23 be split evenly between the Council and the Executive. Now the Executive nor the
24 Council is in no way bound by the Spending Affordability Guidelines, but in this case,
25 since the proposal came from the Council President, and because the Council would
26 have been responding to the input we received from the community, I think that that
27 \$2.5 million target would have unusual weight; more so perhaps, Mr. Berliner, than the
28 rest of this resolution. Because if the Council states at the beginning of a process, and
29 we have just today unanimously voted to appoint a grants advisory group in the consent
30 calendar, if we send a signal to the community that \$2.5 million is the amount that we
31 think we have to spend, I think that that is much more significant in terms of community
32 expectations when they're going through our process probably than the rest of these
33 broad categories for spending. I don't think that the public, which we just learned in this
34 feedback exercise, is very concerned about public safety; it's going to hold us to the
35 precise dollar amount that we set aside for public safety in this resolution; but I do think
36 that nonprofit organizations that pay a lot of attention to our process are going to take us
37 seriously in this vote when we tell them how much we think we will have to spend to
38 give out for their grants. And so I was quite disappointed to learn that the MFP
39 Committee had scaled back the Council President's recommendation and that the MFP
40 Committee was saying that the total amount available for grants in fiscal 09 would be
41 only \$4,000 -- \$4 million -- thank you -- \$4 million, \$2 million for the Executive and \$2
42 million for the Council. The Council President's goal -- the Council President had two
43 goals. The first was to respond to the community and provide some clarity in terms of
44 how much we thought we would spend. The second would be to provide some clarity to



December 11, 2007

1 the County Council itself so that at the end of the grants process we did not find
2 ourselves scrambling for dollars in a largely political exercise. The MFP Committee, with
3 respect to that committee and its hardworking members and to the staff, I think fails to
4 meet both of those objectives. If the purpose here is why are we saying 4 million now,
5 but we hope we can do more later then that defeats the first purpose that is to provide
6 clarity to the community. The community doesn't really know what it's shooting for. We
7 aren't given them a clear statement as to what we think we have to give. It's just as
8 political as ever before. We are still going to scramble for more at the end, and a really
9 worthy proposal might slip in, and so the guidance really isn't meaningful because we
10 are saying at the time we vote we hope to do better. And secondarily, it doesn't help us
11 because -- and it doesn't help Council President on whom the burden will primarily fall,
12 of finding these dollars because we are still hoping we can do better, so we are still
13 scrounging in PAYGO dollars or scrounging around to raise a couple extra from the
14 energy tax or the exercises that we have gone in the past to meet community
15 expectations, which are not declining let me assure you. The economy is down, job
16 growth is down, people are losing jobs. Foreclosure rates are up. People in the
17 community are hurting, and the need for service is greater; the need for emergency
18 food; the need for shelter; the need for assistance to the developmentally disabled; to
19 provide activities and transportation for the elderly; to assist the wide range of people
20 who we know who are most deserving of help from government. If we are going to slash
21 more than a quarter of total spending in any one area, I certainly would not advocate
22 that needy people, aid to nonprofits, be the first category of spending that we offer up
23 for a cut. Because in FY08 combined, the Executive and Council in discretionary grants
24 in the current fiscal year spent a total of \$5.4 million. So let us acknowledge that the
25 Council President's proposal to spend \$5 million is a cut of 8% below the base. This
26 money is in the base right now -- 5.4 million. So to go to 4 million, which is what the
27 committee is advocating, is a cut of 33%; 33% in assistance to needy people. We're not
28 cutting the police by 33%. We're not cutting the libraries by 33%. We are not cutting any
29 other category by that amount in this resolution, and yet the one area where we are
30 most likely to hold to the committee's recommendation and actually do what we are
31 saying we are going to do is an enormous reduction in that one category of spending
32 that directly benefits the people who most need our help. Is that a wise step to take? I
33 would say not. And so I would move to go back to what the Council President proposed
34 that set aside \$5 million in FY09, evenly split between the Executive and the Council,
35 and if the votes are not here on the body to do that then my next proposal will be to just
36 delete this language all together. I don't think that we provide clarity to the community if
37 we vote for something that we hope to find more money for later. And so I don't think we
38 achieve the purpose of the language by what the committee has done. Again, I respect
39 the committee's work. I understand that we're trying to send a signal that we're fiscally
40 tough and fiscally responsible. We understand the hard circumstances and the hard
41 times. And I go along with that. I know that times are tough. And when the Council
42 President proposed 5 million, I said wow that's less than we gave out this year, but that
43 seems reasonable and appropriate. Four million is just -- it's not credible. I don't think
44 we can go to the community and say we are going to provide that much less in these



December 11, 2007

1 amounts, and it's not going to be credible to the County Executive. He's not going to go
2 along with it; no chance. So I so move that we go back to the \$5 million proposed to the
3 MFP Committee for this purpose for the community grants.

4
5 President Knapp,

6 I would just for point of clarification, of the \$5.4 million that we did last year -- and the
7 reason I ended up with the number I did was we took a portion -- a portion of that
8 George B. Thomas Learning Centers, and actually put that into the base. And so if you
9 assume that out of the grants process and into the base, then the 5-million number was
10 actually -- basically kind of flat funding where we were from last year. So just to clarify
11 that point. I think that's accurate because we took that big chunk and plugged it into the
12 base. On top of -- . Come join us, Peggy.

13
14 Ms. Fitzgerald-Bare,

15 I'm sorry. The amount of funding for the George B. Thomas Learning Academy that was
16 shifted from community grants to the base of the budget of the Department of Health
17 and Human Services, that funding which was around \$600,000 is not included in the
18 \$5.4 million that was approved.

19
20 Councilmember Leventhal,

21 Exactly. So to go from 5.4 to 5 is a cut of 8%.

22
23 President Knapp,

24 [Inaudible] we had last week. That was different. Okay.

25
26 Councilmember Leventhal,

27 Yeah.

28
29 Ms. Fitzgerald-Bare,

30 Sorry.

31
32 Councilmember Leventhal,

33 Which, again, I was willing to go along with. Times are tough. We can't do anything. I
34 think that was -- when the Council President proposed \$5 million, I thought that was a
35 reasonable amount.

36
37 President Knapp,

38 Okay. Duly noted. Councilmember Andrews.

39
40 Vice President Andrews,

41 Thank you. Well the Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee is as eloquent
42 as ever in advocating for the neediest in our community, and I appreciate his strong
43 leadership on this. I would note that our Health and Human Services Department does
44 spend a tremendous amount of money, tens of millions if not more on programs that



December 11, 2007

1 directly benefit the needy as well. And most of our support for nonprofits does come -- is
2 actually spent through Health and Human Services Department. These are the
3 discretionary grants. But I recognize that it would be a large cut to do what is being
4 proposed by MFP, and I commend MFP for their diligence going through the Spending
5 Affordability process, which has frustrated Councilmembers for a long time, at least nine
6 years as Chuck Sherer said -- probably longer. It seems to me what might make sense
7 here is to -- and perhaps people can come together on this -- is to come up with a
8 middle number that would set a target that would be a smaller reduction than is
9 currently spent but not as large as what MFP is proposing. And if the amount that was
10 spent this year -- it was 5.4, then what I would suggest, perhaps we could unite around,
11 is a figure between the 5.4 and the 4 million recommended by MFP -- say 4.7 million as
12 our target. I think that clearly indicates that we expect it to be a difficult year, that there
13 are going to be cuts in a lot of places, but it would cushion the proposed decrease,
14 which would be very large. So I would offer that as a friendly amendment or as a
15 separate motion at a time if Mr. Leventhal's original motion is not passed.

16
17 Councilmember Leventhal,

18 I mean, again, I think the more we debate this, the more real it becomes. And so unlike
19 Mr. Berliner's point about the Spending Affordability Guidelines overall my expectation
20 is that, based on my conversations with the Council President and what I understood
21 was his motive in putting this forward in the first place was that he will really be guided
22 by this number that we arrive at this morning, and that we're sending a signal to the
23 community. So I have great respect for the Council Vice President in his desire to bring
24 people together, but I feel like I'm fighting for a few hundred thousand dollars that's
25 going to go to really worthy purposes here, and I don't want to vote for his motion.

26
27 President Knapp,

28 Okay, then we'll dispose of the first motion and when that gets about resolved and we'll
29 go from there. Next, we have Councilmember Floreen.

30
31 Councilmember Floreen,

32 I am willing to just -- to [inaudible].

33
34 President Knapp,

35 Okay. Some action on Spending Affordability? Councilmember Ervin?

36
37 Councilmember Ervin,

38 Thank you, Mr. President. We have been having a lot of conversations about how
39 difficult this budget year is going to be. We hear that every year, but maybe, you know,
40 the chickens have finally come home to roost. We'll have to see. But in the meantime,
41 the people who are most impacted by this market downturn are the people who
42 Councilmember Leventhal is talking about. And I don't believe that we should sit here at
43 this dais and basically send a message to the people in the nonprofit community whose
44 job it is to serve the neediest in our community, I believe that it's a problem. And I was



December 11, 2007

1 looking at this county services survey, and one of the things that just stuck in my mind
2 was in the quality of county services, services for low-income people was among the
3 lowest rated. And even though we have an excellent Health and Human Services
4 Department in our County, they cannot do the work that I believe needs to be done out
5 there in our community, especially among emerging communities in the County, which
6 there are many. And I agree with Councilmember Leventhal that we need to set this bar,
7 and I'm going to vote with him on his resolution.

8
9 President Knapp,
10 Councilmember Elrich.

11
12 Councilmember Elrich,
13 I'm going to wind up supporting Phil's position, but I just don't think that this is a fair
14 discussion of what the County does and what the County does to help needy people. I
15 think Phil's point about how much money we spend through Health and Human
16 Services is -- dwarfs the amount of money we give out in these grants. And the fact is
17 that in the budget we will not do everything through Health and Human Services for the
18 very people that everybody is talking about because in the total amount of dollars that
19 are available, we are unable to do this. And so the amount of money that's available, for
20 example, on the grant side can also be looked at as that much money that's less
21 available to the government to deliver the same services to the same people that
22 everybody's talking about. I would rather look at this holistically and see what comes
23 over from the Executive in terms of what we're doing in Health and Human Services,
24 and then determine what we need to add to it. My frustration with this process -- and I
25 can vote for this and still be frustrated with it and not be happy with it, and I intend to do
26 that, George -- is that there's no direct nexus between what we need to deliver to people
27 and what we give out in grants. And we can say that all the grants went to worthy,
28 needy people, but if you actually were to read off that list of grants, not everything there
29 is going to people who we would consider really needy or reaching that bottom portion
30 of the population. I don't think we want to have a discussion on every single grant we
31 gave out, because every single grant would not pass that test. We gave out money to
32 lots of worthy groups. Some of this money could wind up in contracts given through
33 HHS; and if it's given in contracts, that to me is just as legitimate in giving this as a
34 grant. We need to look at the whole package of what we do. I don't think as others in
35 this Council I think agree that we do enough for people at the bottom end of
36 Montgomery County. But there are a number of ways of going out and doing that, and I
37 am interested in looking at the package. And what I really would like to get to is the
38 point that we knew if we were giving a grant it completes a mission and does something
39 which we feel the government hasn't been able to do, and which really needs to be
40 done. A lot of the grant programs that we run are completions of services that we do in
41 the government that the government is not positioned to do. We are not going to hire
42 the staff and have the kind of workforce to deliver these services. We rely on nonprofits
43 to do them. And I would just like to strengthen that nexus so that I know when I spend
44 this money that it is completing the mission, that it is going to where it needs to go. And



December 11, 2007

1 that's what I think the problem is with the process right now. This is why I think Roger
2 and I were in the same position, and I believe Ms. Trachtenberg and Phil and others
3 that know this grant process is sort of discombobulated a little bit, and we can do a
4 better job that we're doing now. So this is the best we've got in front of us. I'm certainly
5 not going to propose a radical change to the process at this point. I like the idea of
6 working this out over the year. And I will be happy to vote for grant money. But I would
7 like to see us work on a better nexus between what we are trying to accomplish and
8 what we spend.

9
10 President Knapp,
11 Councilmember Trachtenberg.

12
13 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
14 Thank you, President Knapp. A few comments since I Chair the MFP, and again it is
15 where all the action is, and we are not at the 45-minute point yet.

16
17 President Knapp,
18 But we don't have to use all 45 minutes.

19
20 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
21 And I promise I'll only take a few minutes. You know, I appreciate the comments of
22 colleagues. You know, I'm coming at this from a few different perspectives. I am
23 certainly well aware of the important role that the nonprofit community plays here in this
24 County in terms of delivery of services. I actually have worked for a number of them, a
25 number of them that have gotten different types of grants from the County. So I'm quite
26 familiar with the important role that they play, and that the funding and support that this
27 County government provides is critical for the delivery of what they do provide. As I said
28 earlier, I am still of the mind set that eventually we have to get to much more of a
29 strategic process around this with a centralized function. I'm not only concerned about
30 addressing the needs here in the community, but I'm also concerned about performance
31 issues for everyone, not just those that are solely funded by grant dollars, but even I'm
32 concerned over the function of different departments and whether or not we have the
33 accountability that we really need to be having certainly in times that are tough. And I
34 believe that Council Vice President Andrews made a fine point when suggesting that --
35 stating very clearly actually that there are a number of different funding mechanisms
36 that are provided indeed for these nonprofit partners, and clearly there are a number of
37 programs that are funded directly right through the Executive's budget. And there are all
38 those other categories of grants that are used as well. I think the purpose of our
39 discussion yesterday and, and Roger you correct me if I am wrong, but I believe I
40 recollect accurately was simply that we felt within the committee that we wanted to start
41 with a number that was a little bit more conservative. Maybe we looked at the 4 million
42 and maybe it was too conservative. So with that in mind, I'm going to state for the record
43 that I would support the motion made by my colleague, Vice President Andrews. I am
44 looking to be pragmatic in this; however, at the same time, I thought it was reasonable



December 11, 2007

1 to start at a point less than last year simply because we still don't really know what the
2 numbers are going to look like. I am cautiously optimistic that things will actually be
3 better in May than we're thinking they might be. But I don't have a reading on my crystal
4 ball in that regard yet. So given that, I am in support of what the Council Vice President
5 has provided as a compromise.

6
7 President Knapp,
8 Councilmember Leventhal.

9
10 Councilmember Leventhal,
11 Someone's calling me; sorry. Look, let me just be very clear. My preference would be
12 that rather than appearing tough today and making a dramatic cut which is more likely
13 to carry than anything else we do in this resolution, if the votes are not there to stick to
14 the Council President's original proposal of 5 million, I would honestly rather delete this
15 language all together. I think it's a big mistake, and we do not achieve our purpose by
16 saying well we're saying only 4 million now but we hope we can do more later. The
17 County -- well we're not -- no we -- my first motion is to stick with the 5 million that the
18 Council President proposed originally. If we have the votes for that, I think that's better.
19 It's still a cut. There isn't anything in here that we are proposing a real cut to. Okay, all
20 we're doing is halting the rate of growth. So when we talk about this \$400 million
21 shortfall, we are talking about \$400 million behind the growth that we hope to achieve in
22 the budget. We are not proposing in this Spending Affordability Guidelines any real cuts
23 to any other aspect of the budget; no real cuts to recreation, no real cuts to libraries, no
24 real cuts to police, no real cuts to parks. The only thing that we are proposing a real
25 dollar cut to is the grants that we provide to community service organizations. I think
26 that's a real policy mistake, and just I don't think it's wise. And if we're doing it as an
27 effort to appear tough we're appearing tough in the wrong place. So it would be fine with
28 me not to give guidance to the community. I thought that's what I agreed to in
29 committee. It would have been fine to me to go along with the Council President's
30 proposal, to provide some reasonable stability, a cut of 8%, and to provide an even
31 share between the Executive and Council, which the Executive may well feel free to
32 ignore. If we tell the Executive he can only spend 2 million when he spent 3.6 million
33 this year, I assure he won't do that. So it's a pointless exercise. So again, while I know
34 the Council Vice President's desire is to bring us together, I welcome that effort. If we're
35 doing this because we're going to be bound by it, the number is too small. If we're doing
36 it and we're not going to be bound it, then let's not do it, because it sends the wrong
37 signal to the community. So my motion is on the table. You know, I could spend a lot of
38 time responding to all of my friend and neighbor and colleague, Mr. Elrich's allegation
39 that we have bad government in Montgomery County, but we don't. We have good
40 government. So the suggestion that Mr. Elrich made that we're embarrassed by any of
41 the \$5.4 million in grants we allocated, I don't think it's a good exercise for the public,
42 but it may make us feel better to go through every last grant and call out every last
43 community organization that received funds from this Executive and this Council this
44 year. I'm proud of the money we appropriated. I'm not embarrassed by any one of those



December 11, 2007

1 grants. And I would not have a problem publicly disclosing. We have indeed publicly
2 disclosed every single one of the grants. And I have some familiarity with the Health and
3 Human Services Department's budget, and I don't think that government knows it all,
4 and I don't think the government is the source of the best ideas about how to serve the
5 community. I think we want an active partnership with the nonprofit sector that actually
6 delivers services, and we want to entertain proposals from the effected parties
7 themselves. So I think we do want a two-way street, not a one-way street where the
8 community comes to us and says we are aware of a need that you may not know about.
9 And we are asking for funds to help us in partnership with us, not all the funds,
10 leveraged funds, to meet that need. I don't think government knows it all. I have a high
11 regard for Uma Aluwalia and I talk with her several times a week. I don't think she
12 knows ever need that out there in the community, and I don't think she's best situated to
13 describe where every single need is. I like a process that is interactive where the
14 community comes to us. So to say that the government ought to hand out all that money
15 and we are embarrassed by the grants we gave out, I have spent a lot of years on this
16 trying to clean up the process, make it less political and more merit based. And I
17 continue to work on that, and I resent the suggestion that we are embarrassed by any of
18 the grants. I am not embarrassed.

19
20 President Knapp,

21 While I appreciate the comments of all my colleagues, I'd originally proposed the 5
22 million. I understand that the committee's recommendation.

23
24 Unidentified,
25 [Inaudible]

26
27 President Knapp,

28 We are going to move to question. I just wanted to get everybody back on the same
29 page a minute. I think it is important to address the transparency piece. I think we have
30 done that with the process that we talked about earlier today. I also think it's important
31 for the Council to share in the process with the County Executive in a way that I don't
32 think has happened in the past. The Executive can always make a recommendation that
33 we choose to pay attention to or not pay attention to; that is the Council's prerogative.
34 And so the County Executive will do what he does; I hope we do this in partnership. I
35 think it's also important for us to keep in mind the concerns about the budget. And I've
36 heard that very clearly as well. There is no more ardent supporter of the disadvantage
37 to our community that Mr. Leventhal and he's made persuasive cases again today. So I
38 think everyone has made good processes or good comments. I think the Spending
39 Affordability process is one that we are going to continue to focus on and refine further.
40 And so I appreciate everything that's out there. The one point I guess I would just make
41 is we tend to get into this point, and we'll do this in April and May as well where we talk
42 a lot, spend a lot of time talking about a small part of the budget. And that it's not
43 important, but then -- and we look at the bigger budget, we tend not to spend as much
44 time, and so I think we need to continue to keep that in mind as we go forward looking



December 11, 2007

1 at our budget in the coming year. So we have before us Mr. Leventhal's motion to
2 increase the Spending Affordability Guideline for the grants recommendation from \$4
3 million, as the committee recommended, to \$5 million. All in favor of the motion? Mr.
4 Leventhal, Ms. Ervin, Ms. Floreen and myself. Those opposed. Mr. Berliner, Mr.
5 Andrews, Ms. Trachtenberg and Mr. Elrich; the motion is not carried. It's a tie vote, 4-4.
6 Mr. Andrews.

7
8 Vice President Andrews,
9 As I mentioned, I would move now to set the target at 4.7 million, which is halfway
10 between what was funded this year and the MFP Recommendation. I think that is the
11 right balance at this point.

12
13 President Knapp,
14 Is there a second?

15
16 Councilmember Trachtenberg,
17 Second

18
19 Vice President Knapp,
20 Mr. Leventhal.

21
22 Councilmember Leventhal,
23 With regret, I have high regard for the Council Vice President, but I'm going to vote
24 against the motion. And my preference would be we just delete the language all
25 together at this point.

26
27 President Knapp,
28 All in favor of the Council Vice President's motion to increase the Spending Affordability
29 recommendation from 4 million to 4.7 million; all in support? Mr. Berliner, Mr. Andrews,
30 Mr. Elrich, and Ms. Trachtenberg and myself. Those opposed? Mr. Leventhal, Ms.
31 Ervin, and Ms. Floreen. The motion carries. Ms. Floreen.

32
33 Councilmember Floreen,
34 Thank you. If we could get back to the big numbers.

35
36 President Knapp,
37 There's an idea.

38
39 Councilmember Floreen,
40 I just wanted to make sure I understood this. And I completely subscribe to the point of
41 view of Mr. Berliner about this process. I don't think, folks, it's very meaningful. And all
42 these numbers are going to change. Let's agree. So there you go. But it is a snapshot of
43 where we are at this minute, and I wanted to make sure I understood it. Chuck, I'm
44 looking at circle 4 of the MFP -- the packet we have for right now. If you could tell me --



December 11, 2007

1 and I am looking at line 18. Is it correct to say that what the projections and whatnot
2 show that out of a \$3.9 billion budget, we seem to be off the mark in terms of revenues
3 by about \$5 million. That's what's projected. Is that correct?

4
5 Mr. Sherer,
6 What, uh -- .

7
8 Councilmember Floreen,
9 Total resources, fiscal 08 approved is 3.9.

10
11 Mr. Sherer,
12 You're in column A then, the 5.1 million.

13
14 Councilmember Floreen,
15 Yeah. And then it says revised is 3.947, and the difference is 5 million. Is that right?

16
17 Mr. Sherer,
18 That's right. That's the difference between the revenues you projected in May and the
19 latest estimate -- .

20
21 Councilmember Floreen,
22 Where we appear to be right now.

23
24 Mr. Sherer,
25 Six months later, that's right, for the current fiscal year.

26
27 Councilmember Floreen,
28 And then -- so -- that's pretty good.

29
30 Mr. Sherer,
31 It is.

32
33 Councilmember Floreen,
34 Five million out of 3.9 billion. This is sort of a charge.

35
36 Mr. Sherer,
37 The main reason is it came out as good as it did is if you look above that, the \$96.1
38 million increase in reserve from 07.

39
40 Councilmember Floreen,
41 Right. It's the reserve. So this is what makes me feel that we need to be careful about
42 our -- what we're seeing here. If you go over to column I, what's being proposed to us is
43 an assumption that we are going to have \$35 million less to spend in the coming year,
44 in 09; that's what the assumption is right now than we currently have.



December 11, 2007

1
2 Mr. Sherer,
3 That's right. That's correct.

4
5 Councilmember Floreen,
6 So that is the difference. And then how does this fit into the \$400 million gap issue?

7
8 Mr. Sherer,
9 I don't show a gap. I show a reserve.

10
11 Councilmember Floreen,
12 No, this is why I ask.

13
14 Mr. Sherer,
15 That's right. Well the \$400 million gap would be what you'd get if you use the same
16 resources I have here. Because OMB is using the same resources. But if you let
17 expenditures grow at their historic rates plus add in expenditures for GASBY that gives
18 you a \$400 million gap.

19
20 Councilmember Floreen,
21 So it's the difference between the 35 million decrease in assumed revenue and the X-
22 amount of increase and expenditure that might occur based on historical prices.

23
24 Mr. Sherer,
25 That's right.

26
27 Councilmember Floreen,
28 And is that -- and that's not reflected in this packet?

29
30 Mr. Sherer,
31 No this shows a decrease in spending overall of almost 1%, whereas, the fiscal plan
32 with the \$400 million gap in spending is would grow 9%.

33
34 Councilmember Floreen,
35 So it's a difference in spending between about 1% and 9%.

36
37 Mr. Sherer,
38 Well a 1% decrease.

39
40 Councilmember Floreen,
41 A 1% decrease. So it's a 10% range.

42
43 Mr. Sherer,
44 Something like that.



December 11, 2007

1
2 Councilmember Floreen,
3 Okay. Thank you. I think it's important to put this conversation that we just had about 5
4 million versus 4 million versus 4.7 million in perspective. We're talking about big
5 numbers, and they are changing on pretty much a daily basis. Okay. Thank you very
6 much.

7
8 President Knapp,
9 Thank you. We have before us the committee recommendation as amended, and so all
10 those in favor of the committee recommendation as amended. Just checking. That is
11 unanimous among those present. And that didn't take 45 minutes, well done, everyone.
12 We have one more item. We have a public hearing. Good afternoon, ladies and
13 gentlemen, this is a public hearing on special appropriations to the Maryland National
14 Park and Planning Commission's Capital Budget and amendments to the FY07-12
15 Capital Improvements Program in the amounts of \$1.2 million for local parks and \$3.5
16 million for non-local parks. A Planning Housing and Economic Development Committee
17 work session will be scheduled at a later date. Persons wishing to submit additional
18 comments should do so by the close of business on December 28, 2007, so that your
19 views can be included in the material, which staff will prepare for Council consideration.
20 Before beginning your presentation, please state your name clearly for the record, and
21 spell any unusual names. We have no speakers for this hearing. We have comments
22 from Mr. Leventhal.

23
24 Councilmember Leventhal,
25 Could I just be recorded as voting against the Spending Affordability Guidelines, Mr.
26 President?

27
28 President Knapp,
29 So noted. And those are all of our comments. Folks, we are -- .

30
31 Councilmember Berliner,
32 Point of personal privilege. I think I was out of the room when we did the consent
33 calendar, so I just wanted to be recorded in favor of the consent calendar.

34
35 President Knapp,
36 I thank you very much. And the Council is in adjournment. We have a holiday party that
37 begins shortly, and I urge everyone to be safe this holiday season, get some rest and
38 enjoy themselves, and very little driving. Thank you all very much.